**Shortage of drinking water in Darjeeling**

3489. SHRI DAWA LAMA: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be. pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 1483 given in the Rajya Sabha on 8th March, 2000 and state:

(a) the number of villages (block-wise) in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong sub-divisions as well as under Mirik block, where there are no scope to have filtered water for drinking purpose, as on 1st April 1999;

(b) whether access to water supply includes access to unhygenic drinking water sources under duress; and

(c) what amount of money was utilised in the said areas above under ARWSP and AUWSP in last five years, block-wise, year-wise and programme-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) Rural drinking water supply is a State subject. The State Governments implement the programme under the State sector Minimum Needs Programme (MNP). The Central Government only supplements the efforts of the States by providing funds under the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP). As the powers to plan, sanction and implement their own individual rural water supply schemes have been delegated to the States, sub-division-wise and Block-wise information is not maintained at the Central level.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The funds utilised for rural water supply activities by the Government of West. Bengal under the ARWSP and the MNP during last five years is as under:—

*(Rs. in crore)*

| Year | ARWSP | MNP | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1995-96 | 34.993 | 41.743 | 76.736 |
| 1996-97 | 41.888 | 32.057 | 73.945 |
| 1997-98 | 43.410 | 69.541 | 112.951 |
| 1998-99 | 58.622 | 60.341 | 118.963 |
| 1999-2000* | 40.223 | 30.265 | 70.488 |

*Provisional

As per the information furnished by the Ministry of Urban Development, the reported expenditure under Accelerated Urban Water Supply Programme (AUWSP) in West Bengal since its launch in 1993-94 is Rs. 3.28 crore. However, out of this amount no expenditure has been incurred in district Darjeeling under AUWSP.

**Withholding of Gram Panchayat election**

3490. SHRI DAWA LAMA: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether according to provision of Article 243 M (3) (a) and (3) (b), Gram Panchayats election can be held in tea garden areas of Darjeeling Hills and Panchayat Samiti elections in Darjeeling hills;

(b) if so, the reasons for withholding the said elections for years; and

(c) the action proposed by Government to conduct the electons immediately?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SUNDAR LAL PATWA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Government of West Bengal have intimated that since the commencement of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992, there were continuous agitations in respect of elections to the Panchayats in the Hill areas of Darjeeling District where the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was functioning. After a series of discussion, elections to Gram Panchayats in these areas were held in March, 1995. The next elections to Gram Panchayats are scheduled for May, 2000.

Elections to Intermediate Panchayats could not be held and the State authorities have been negotiating with regard to holding of elections to these Panchayats.